

*PolitiFact*

Rep. Betty McCollum says the government wastes a remarkable amount of money sponsoring a NASCAR team -- \$7 million a year.

"In 2011, the U.S. Army is sponsoring Ryan Newman's #39 Chevrolet Impala in the Spirit Cup series at a cost to the taxpayers of \$7 million," McCollum, D-Minn., said in a statement.

A reader wondered whether this was true, so we looked into it.

The NASCAR sponsorship was cited many times during the recent House of Representatives deliberations on budget cuts. During one round of budget-cutting in February 2011, the House voted to slice more than \$61 billion from the budget, but it spared the money that the Army pays to sponsor Newman's NASCAR team.

The Army has sponsored various NASCAR teams for many years and has sponsored Newman's for the past two years. Backers of the expenditure say sponsorship pays off in recruiting leads. "Last year alone, the U.S. Army's motor sports programs generated more than 46,000 qualified leads, more than 1,300 pledges of support from key business and community leaders, and more than 484 million media impressions (34 million of which offered specific Army recruiting messages)," said Newman in a website discussion.

A spokesman for Stewart Hass Racing confirmed that the Army pays \$7.4 million for its co-sponsorship. The team's website quotes Newman saying that he is energized by the sponsorship.

"Being around the U.S. Army soldiers is an inspiration to me and the race team," he said. "The physical, emotional and mental strength of these individuals is a driving force behind our mission to get the soldier's car into Victory Lane."

But to McCollum the sponsorship is too much.

"Taxpayer-funded NASCAR race cars are an absurdity at a time when the Republican-Tea Party is cutting federal support for homeless veterans, law enforcement officers, and firefighters," McCollum said in a press release announcing her proposed amendment.

"With trillion dollar deficits, this amendment is where the rubber meets the road for my Republican Tea Party colleagues," she said. But her amendment failed.

We won't weigh in on the debate over whether the Army's money is well spent or not. When it comes to the dollars, though, McCollum is on the mark, so we rate this statement True.